

Comprehensive Health Education Act

Healthy Youth. Bright Futures. Strong Communities.

The Comprehensive Health Education Act (CHEA) was enacted in 1988 to ensure South Carolina students receive an age-appropriate, comprehensive, education program developed with community control in compliance with the provisions of the law. Read on to learn about what the law includes.



What students are taught:

Grades Kindergarten through 5th (elementary school)



- Community health, nutrition, personal health, dental hygiene, growth and development, and accident prevention.
- Age-appropriate reproductive health instruction may be included at the discretion of the local school board. Discussing methods of contraception before the sixth grade is not permitted.
- Age-appropriate information on sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention.*

Grades 6th through 8th (middle school)



- Health education **MUST** include all topics included in grades kindergarten through five in addition to environmental health, substance abuse, mental and emotional health, and reproductive health education. Information on sexually transmitted diseases is to be included.
- The local school board, guided by their local CHEA Advisory Committee, may include instruction on family life education and pregnancy prevention.
- Age-appropriate information on sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention.*

Grades 9th through 12th (high school)



- One time during their four years of high school, each student shall receive at least 12 ½ hours (750 minutes) of reproductive health education and pregnancy prevention education as defined above.
- Age-appropriate information on sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention.*

Local control of content

In South Carolina, local school boards select the instructional materials that address reproductive health education, family life education and pregnancy prevention education. In addition:



- Each school board appoints a 13 member committee to assist in the selection of instructional materials. The committee must contain: parents (2), clergy (3), health professionals (2), teachers (2), students (2) — one being the president of a high school's student body, and non-school employees (2).
- Parents are notified in advance of a student's enrollment in reproductive health or pregnancy prevention courses. Parents and guardians are given the opportunity to preview all materials and exempt their children.
- Educational personnel teaching any parts of the comprehensive health education program must be appropriately trained.

Restrictions on instruction

In South Carolina, schools and school districts may NOT:



- Discuss “alternate sexual lifestyles from heterosexual relationships” in health education classes.
- Distribute contraception on school grounds, or contract with any provider for distribution on school grounds.
- Offer programs that include abortion counseling or any information concerning abortions.
- Show films and other materials that contain actual or simulated portrayals of sexual activities or intercourse.

> Definition of terms

Comprehensive Health Education:

Encompasses all aspects of a young person’s life, not just sexuality. Included are, among other things: skills, attitudes, and practices of children and youth that are conducive to their good health and that promote wellness, health maintenance, and disease prevention.

Reproductive Health Education:

“Instruction in human physiology, conception, prenatal care and development, childbirth, and postnatal care. Does not include instruction concerning sexual practices outside marriage or those unrelated to reproduction – except within context of disease. Abstinence and the risks associated with sexual activity outside of marriage must be strongly emphasized.”

Pregnancy Prevention Education:

Must stress the importance of abstaining from sexual activity; help students resist peer pressure; and explain methods of contraception and the risks and benefits of each method. Contraceptive education must be given in the context of future, marriage-based, family planning.

*Erin’s Law:

Beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, districts annually shall provide age-appropriate instruction in sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention to all students in four-year-old kindergarten, where offered, through twelfth grade. This instruction must be based on the units developed by the board, through the department, pursuant to Section 59-32-20(B).

Family Life Education:

Intended to develop an understanding of the physical, mental, emotional, social, economic, and psychological aspects of close personal relationships and an understanding of the physiological, psychological, and cultural foundations of human development; provide instruction that will support the development of responsible personal values and behavior and aid in establishing a strong family life for themselves in the future and emphasize the responsibilities of marriage; provide instruction as to the laws of this State relating to the sexual conduct of minors, including criminal sexual conduct.

Talking Points:

1. The Comprehensive Health Education Act (CHEA) emphasizes LOCAL CONTROL.
2. Parents are notified IN ADVANCE of students’ participation in sexuality education. They are given the opportunity to review all material and exempt their children.
3. All instruction, regardless of age-level, STRESSES ABSTINENCE until marriage as the best and first choice for all youth. Contraception is only discussed in the context of future family planning.
4. Sexuality education comprises only a small portion of comprehensive health.
5. Research shows that comprehensive sexuality education does not encourage sexual activity and in fact delays the onset of first intercourse.

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